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European Terrorist Campaign: Cooperation Against NATO

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European Terrorist Campaign: Cooperation Against NATO

Summary

There are growing indications that at least three leftwing European terrorist groups--the German Red Army Faction, the French Action Directe, and the Belgian Communist Combatant Cells-- have launched a coordinated terrorist offensive against NATO. The campaign appears to be broadening in geographic scope and increasing in intensity. While it is possible that the current offensive will abate, the informal liaison arrangements that may already have been created among these terrorist groups probably would remain in effect, enhancing the groups' individual capabilities and making it harder for authorities to defend against them.

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European Terrorist Campaign: Cooperation Against NATO

For years, various European leftwing terrorist groups have called for the establishment of an international united front against "Western Imperialism," and particularly against its most powerful symbols, NATO and the American presence in Europe. Until recently, they appeared to be paying little more than lip service to this goal. In the past few months, however, there have been growing indications that at least three of these groups--the West German Red Army Faction (RAF), the French group Action Directe (AD), and the Belgian Communist Combatant Cells (CCC)--may have launched a coordinated terrorist offensive against NATO. [redacted]

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The Current Campaign

The offensive seems to have begun late last summer with AD attacks in Paris on the Atlantic Institute, the West European Union, and the European Space Agency--all targets that AD communiques erroneously asserted are associated with NATO. Then in October in Belgium, the CCC bombed several multinational firms because of their connections with NATO military activities. [redacted]

In December the pace picked up.

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- In Belgium, the CCC bombed the NATO pipeline system at six points.
- In West Germany, the RAF and its supporters began a long-planned offensive: more than 30 imprisoned RAF members began a hunger strike, while dozens of bombing attacks against targets associated with NATO were carried out in solidarity with the hunger strikers.
- In Portugal, the Popular Forces of 25 April (FP-25) fired several mortar rounds at NATO-related facilities.
- In Spain, Basque Fatherland and Freedom (ETA) bombed a military pipeline.
- In the Netherlands, sympathizers halted a train to demonstrate solidarity with the RAF. [redacted]

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In 1985 the offensive continued in Belgium with a CCC bombing of a US military recreational facility. In West Germany, the RAF undertook additional bombings and assassinated industrialist Dr. Ernst Zimmerman. In France, AD assassinated a senior official of the Ministry of Defense, General Rene Audran, and AD prisoners began a hunger strike in sympathy with the RAF prisoners. In Portugal, FP-25 lobbed mortar rounds at NATO vessels in Lisbon harbor and bombed automobiles belonging to West German servicemen. In the Netherlands, the Northern Terror Front, a hitherto unheard-of group, bombed a police station and a

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defense ministry facility. In Greece, another apparently new group, the National Front, claimed credit for setting off a bomb in a bar crowded with US servicemen, wounding at least 78 persons. [redacted]

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Coordination

We judge it extremely unlikely that so much anti-NATO activity from so many quarters could have arisen spontaneously. Moreover, many of the groups involved have provided both explicit and implicit indications that their actions have been part of a multinational effort. [redacted]

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- o **Targets.** The nearly exclusive focus on NATO-related targets is a striking feature of this campaign, one new to most European groups. Hitherto, for example, AD had usually concentrated on indigenous French targets, FP-25 on Portuguese targets, and ETA on Spanish targets. Even the RAF directed most of its attacks against indigenous West German targets. [redacted]

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- o **Timing.** It seems very unlikely that so many leftwing European terrorist groups would independently decide to mount major anti-NATO campaigns at approximately the same time. Some of the attacks may have been stimulated by the publicity attending one or another of the major terrorist incidents, and some may have been in response to public exhortations by the RAF and AD to join the campaign. But many of these operations required considerable planning and preparations that almost certainly were set in motion well before the attacks began. [redacted]

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- o **Tactics.** In general, the groups have used similar tactics. Most of the terrorist attacks have been bombings, the majority directed against property rather than people. In West Germany, Belgium, and France, however, car bombings have been attempted. Hitherto these had been rare in Western Europe. The AD assassination was accomplished with a handgun; it was a tactic unusual for AD but common for the PAF. The use by FP-25 of a mortar, on the other hand, was unique. [redacted]

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- o **Rhetoric.** Several of the groups have made public statements asserting that they were acting in concert with other groups against a mutual enemy. The RAF and AD, for example, issued a joint communique declaring war on the "imperialist" system. The CCC asserted that two of its attacks in Belgium were to demonstrate solidarity with the RAF. The RAF operatives who murdered Doctor Zimmerman dedicated their act to the memory of a Provisional IRA terrorist who died in a hunger strike in 1981. AD dedicated its assassination of General Audran [redacted]

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to the memory of an RAF martyr. AD prisoners in France began their own hunger strike in sympathy with that of the RAF prisoners in West Germany. On the other hand, the Northern Terror Front did not tie its actions explicitly to support for the RAF or any European terrorist front--although it did threaten to attack facilities associated with NATO. Neither FP-25 nor the ETA have declared their attacks to be part of any international campaign. [redacted]

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- o **Linkages.** Several of the suspected leading members of the CCC reportedly have associated with members or other persons in close contact with both the RAF and AD. The explosives used both in an AD car bombing in Paris and an RAF car bombing attempt that was foiled at Oberammergau came from a batch of dynamite stolen from a Belgian quarry last summer. Paris has long had the reputation of serving as the locale for informal contacts among members of many leftwing European extremist groups--including AD, the RAF, ETA, and FP-25. [redacted]

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Some European terrorist groups have not been active during the current campaign. For example, neither the Red Brigades nor other Italian terrorists have been involved--although there is considerable evidence of longstanding contacts between AD and the Red Brigades, among other Italian extremist groups. Likewise, neither leftwing Turkish groups such as the Marxist-Leninist Armed Propaganda unit (MLAPU) nor such historically anti-NATO groups as the Greek Revolutionary Organization of 17 November or the Spanish October First Antifascist Resistance Group (GRAPO) been heard from. [redacted]

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Nevertheless, the European terrorist front appears to be far more than rhetoric. The evidence shows that some European terrorist groups are now cooperating with each other to an unprecedented degree. The arrangement seems to be more of a cooperative liaison relationship than a formal merger or union. The main participants appear to be the RAF, AD, and the CCC, with the RAF playing the role of senior partner. The rhetoric and the targeting are typical of the RAF; moreover, the RAF would probably reject a lesser role. AD probably was instrumental in helping to establish the arrangement. [redacted]

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Outlook

The hunger strike of the RAF prisoners, which apparently was the signal for the currently intense level of anti-NATO terrorism in Europe, has ended. While this eliminates concern that the death of any of the strikers might have generated a wave of even more intense violence on the part of their supporters, it nevertheless seems unlikely that the current terrorist campaign will now end. Indeed, the anti-NATO terrorist campaign seems to be broadening and increasing in intensity. A major RAF operation

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may be imminent--either in West Germany or France, possibly in conjunction with AD. Perhaps most likely is a spate of assassinations or an operation to capture one or more hostages of sufficient stature to induce the government to accept them in trade for the prisoners. [redacted]

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Even if the current campaign abates, whatever liaison arrangements that may have been created among the participants probably will remain in effect until disrupted by police arrests or, perhaps, by a falling out of some sort. Although their former ideological differences seem to have largely evaporated, we doubt these groups are ready to completely submerge their national identities, independence, and individuality in a formal international terrorist organization or federation. Nevertheless, even informal cooperation enhances their individual capabilities and makes them more formidable adversaries. [redacted]

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